

## Late prehistoric settlement, Berryhill, Aberdeenshire

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with a contribution by A Saville

### ABSTRACT

*Excavation in 1999 and 2000 on Berryhill, Aberdeenshire revealed activity on the site from the Neolithic to the 20th century. The earliest use of the site in the late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age is only represented by a scatter of flint and two small hearths. Later, possibly in the first century AD, a stone walled enclosure was built around the top of the hill. A stone hut circle outwith the enclosure may be contemporary with it but two rectangular structures on the top of the hill are probably later. The complexity of successive uses of the hill suggests caution in the interpretation of similar, superficially simple, small enclosed sites.*

### INTRODUCTION

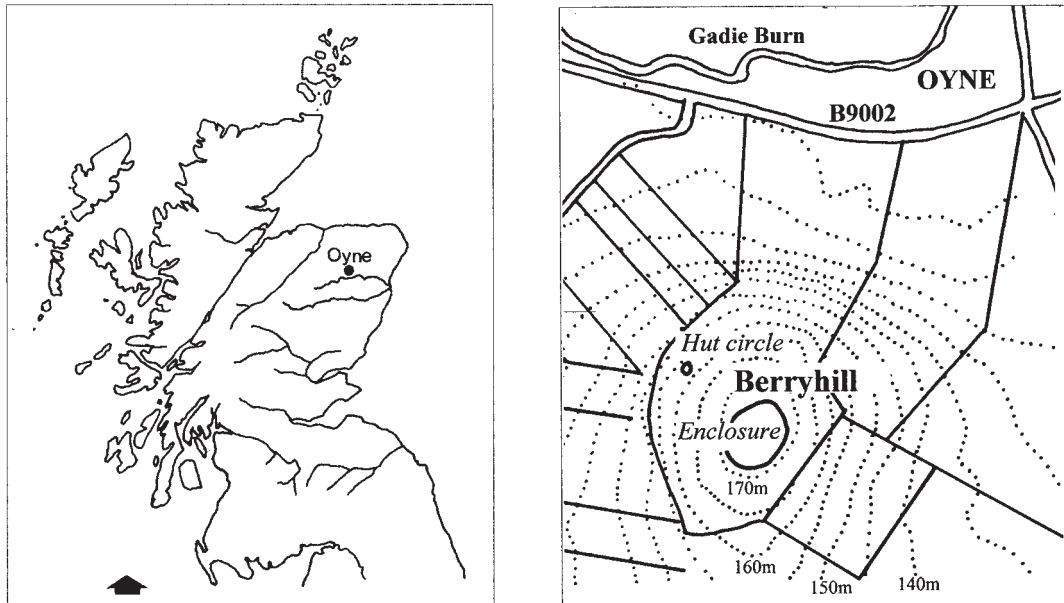
Berryhill (NJ 668 252) at 170m OD is one of a series of low hills around the foot of the prominent mountain range of Bennachie (529m), some 40km (25 miles) west of Aberdeen (illus 1). It lies on the northern side of Bennachie, rising sharply from the low flat boggy ground bordering the Gadie Burn which runs along the valley bottom (c 110m OD). It is surrounded by cultivated farmland but the hill itself is very steep and stony and has not been ploughed, and it can therefore be assumed that settlement evidence is relatively undisturbed. Air photographs (illus 2) and field survey had revealed that a wall enclosed the top of the hill and that there was a stone hut circle on the western slope and two rectangular foundations inside the enclosure. At the base of the hill on the north side there are the tumbled ruins of a 19th-century cottage.

In 1992 the hilltop (but not the hut circle) was given the protection of Scheduled Ancient Monument status. The hill and the field at the foot of it were subsequently bought by

Aberdeenshire Council for development as an archaeological visitor centre. As this involved total destruction of the lower field, this was subject to a trial excavation programme undertaken in 1994 by GUARD (Cullen 1994) which only yielded two pits and two post-holes, none of which could be dated. At the same time the features on the hill were surveyed. During the building operations, the present writer was employed by Aberdeenshire Council to undertake a watching brief when pathways were constructed on the hill.

The decision to excavate on the hill was taken for two reasons. Firstly, the site presented an opportunity to examine one of a number of apparently similar small late-pre-historic hilltop enclosures in the area. Secondly, the public nature of the site not only caused some problems of erosion which needed to be addressed, but also offered a chance to improve interpretation of the site and actively to demonstrate the role and methods of excavation. The excavation, directed by the present writer, was undertaken over two seasons in 1999 and 2000. It was

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ILLUS 1 Location of site. (Based on the Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright)

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## THE EXCAVATION

The aim of the excavation was to examine and if possible to date the settlement. It was intended to assess the function of the areas inside and outside the wall around the hilltop and to relate this activity to the rectangular buildings and to the hut circle on the lower slope (illus 3). Excavation inside the scheduled area was restricted and a resistivity survey of approximately half of the hilltop was therefore undertaken in 1999 by Colin Heathcote, to detect potential settlement activity inside the enclosure wall. Two of the most obvious anomalies were excavated in 2000 (Areas 5 & 6). One of the rectangular structures was also excavated (Area 2). The wall itself was excavated in three areas (Areas 3, 4 & 7).

Outside the wall, the hut circle (Area 1) was fully excavated and large areas of gorse and broom were cleared on the west and north flanks of the hill to enable detailed survey and investigation of a number of apparent stone features. A long section

(Area 3) was excavated north from the wall, downhill towards a feature (illus 3; Area 3A) which appeared to be a second possible hut circle but which excavation proved to be a natural outcrop.

## THE ENCLOSURE WALL

### *Description*

The wall was overgrown but could be traced around the top edge of the hill, surrounding a fairly level, roughly oval area 130m x 110m, some 1ha (c 2 acres) in area. In places the line was angular as if the wall had been built in sections. Two lengths were excavated (Areas 4 & 7) and one area excavated, sectioned and reinstated (Area 3: illus 4). The wall varied in width between 0.7m and 1.1m. Where the structure could be clearly seen it was built with large boulders set vertically along the inner and outer faces and smaller stones in the core. The average surviving height was c 0.4m but one slab stood to a height of 0.8m. The inherent weakness of this structure was well illustrated at a number of places around the circumference where the facing slabs had fallen outwards. In the section in Area 3 the wall was 0.9m wide, surviving to a height of 0.6m. The inner face incorporated large vertical



ILLUS 2 Air photograph of Berryhill before excavation. (© Aberdeenshire Archaeological Services)

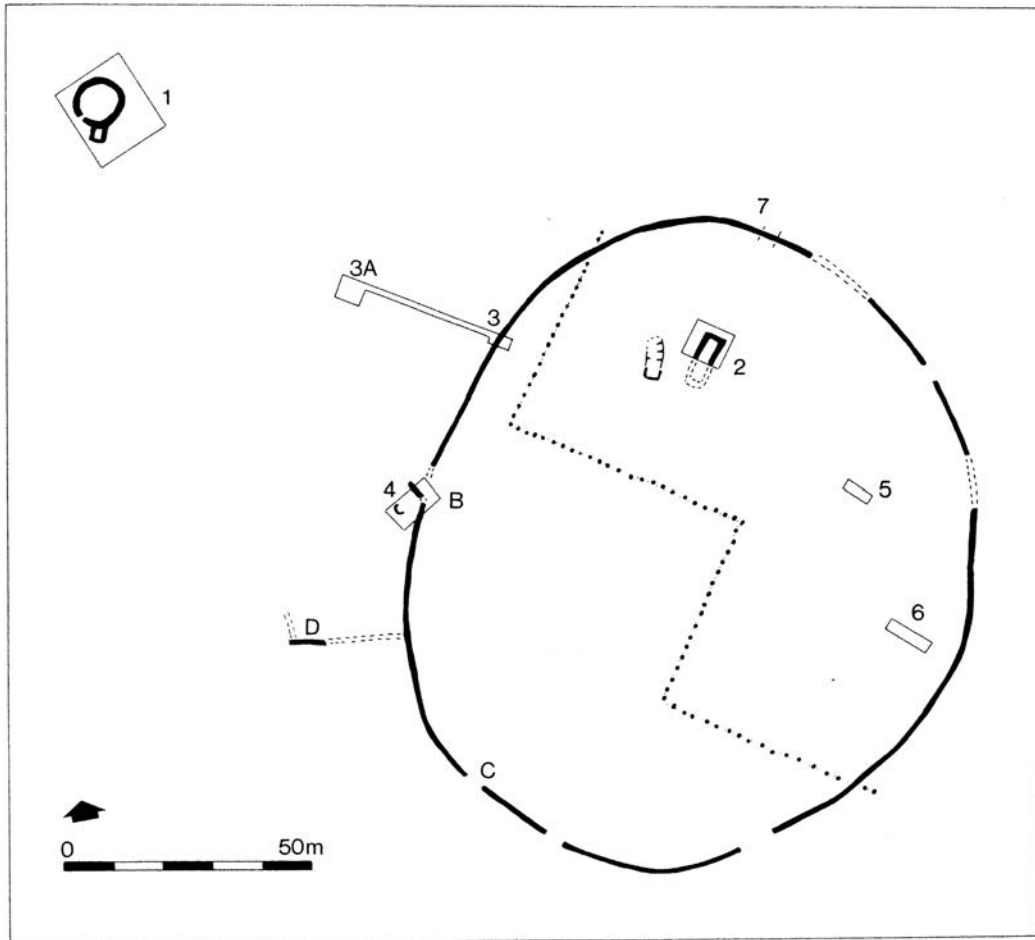
boulders set on edge to give maximum height but not extending to any depth into the wall. Smaller stones had been used to fill the gap between the slabs. On this stretch the outer face was built of smaller stones. The rubble core was fairly loose with little evidence of small stones or earth in the packing. The wall was built on the natural rocky subsoil, although it appeared that some attempt had been made to level the surface. Charcoal from this surface, directly below the wall, produced a calibrated radiocarbon age range of AD 20–AD 85 (Table 1). There was little rubble in the long section excavated down the hillside outside this section of the wall.

There were several breaks in the wall line (illus 3). Most of these appeared to be the result of tumble, or damage by grazing animals, as they were very narrow and surrounded by fallen stones. Two gaps (B & C) seemed more possible as intentional entrances. They were on either side of a radial wall (D) and may be related to grazing on the western flank of the hill. One of these gaps in the wall was

excavated (Area 4: illus 5). It was c 4m wide but a few large boulders lay on the line of the wall suggesting that it had possibly been robbed. A 3m length of wall (403), only 0.35–0.5m wide, was built outside and at an angle to the main wall (402) on the south side of the gap. It was of a much rougher construction and was secondary, probably built using stones from the broken section of the main wall. It is possible that this secondary wall may have been a guide for moving livestock into the enclosed area. Such an interpretation does not preclude the possibility that there was an earlier entrance in this area. There was no evidence of the date of this alteration.

#### *Interpretation and discussion of the enclosure wall*

The calibrated range of AD 20–AD 85 was derived from a single entity charcoal sample directly below the wall stones and must clearly be treated with caution. If the date is valid, it suggests that the wall



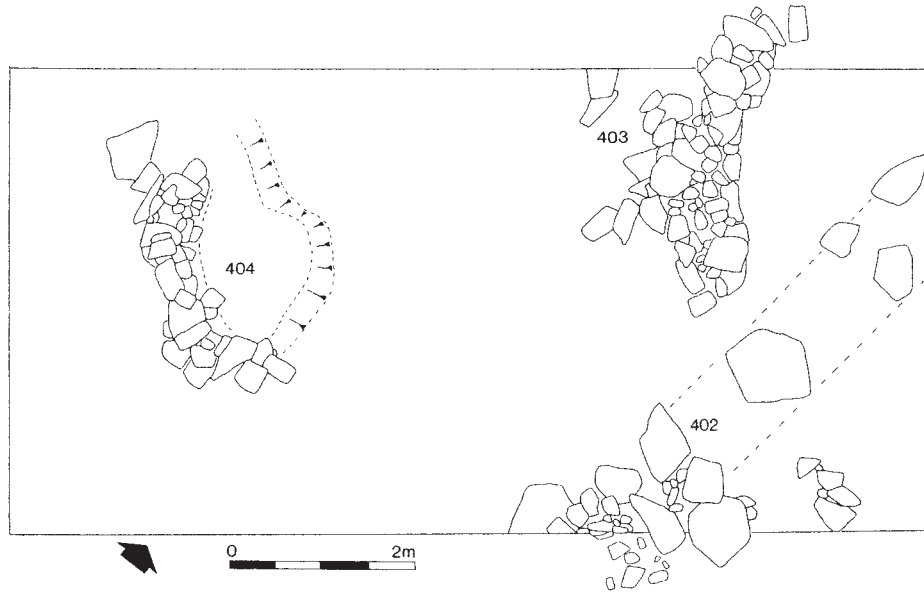
ILLUS 3 Plan of Areas excavated (1–7). The dotted line shows the southern extent of the resistivity survey within the enclosure



ILLUS 4 Area 3. Detail of enclosure wall from inside

was built on or after that date. It does not preclude the wall being much later but makes it less likely that it is earlier.

The wall is not shown on the earliest OS map of the area (1:10,560 County Series, c 1870). On a site of this sort, on the edge of an Improvement landscape and estate, an 18th-century date must be considered for hilltop enclosure walls. Roy's map of 1747–55 shows the policies and enclosures of the neighbouring estate of Westhall on the opposite bank of the Gadie Burn in great detail, including the trees on the hill called Parnassus. On the south side of the Gadie, the farms of Ryehill and Bogend which flank the low ground north of Berryhill are both marked, with cultivated ground between and



ILLUS 5 Area 4. Secondary entrance to the enclosure

TABLE 1  
Radiocarbon dates

Lab code	Sample material	Yrs BP	$\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{‰}$	Calibrated date: 1sigma	Calibrated date: 2sigma
OxA-10386	charcoal, <i>ilex aquifolium</i>	1953 ± 33	-24.1%	AD 20– AD 85	40 BC– AD130

on the lowest flanks of Berryhill, but the top of the hill is shown unenclosed and uncultivated. This evidence and the wall construction, which is unlike the usual 18th- to 20th-century drystone walling in this area, make it unlikely that the enclosure is of modern construction.

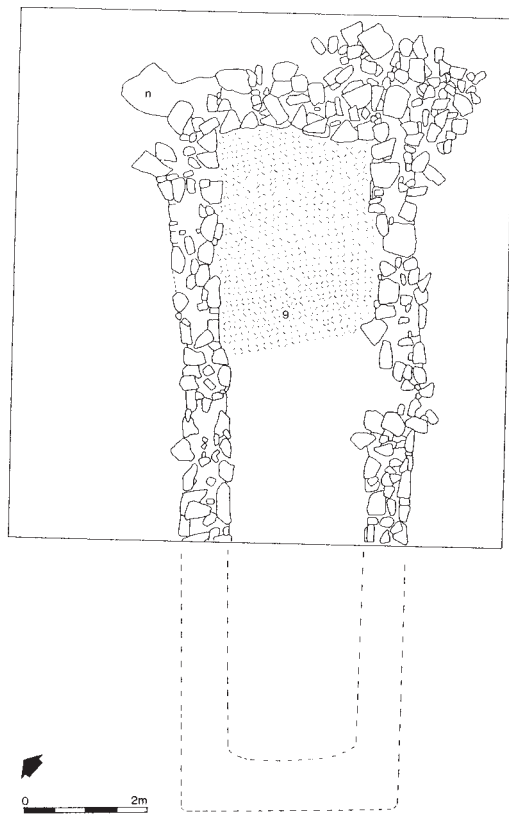
A date in the first century AD for a hilltop enclosure within a few kilometres of the large Roman marching camp at Durno is bound to attract theories of native reactions to the Agricola campaign of AD 83. Clearly such an event could potentially give the impetus to build hilltop enclosures and stimulate the organization of the labour to construct them. However, although some authorities have identified Durno with the Agricola campaign, there are many who regard it as more likely to belong to the Severan campaign of the early third century AD (Gilliver 1999, 86–7). Nor does a militaristic explanation fit the structural evidence at Berryhill. The wall was an inherently weak construction and too long to have been easily defended. A more likely explanation may be that the wall was

built in the earlier part of the first century AD prior to any Roman intervention and that it had no military function. In this case it may be interpreted in economic terms as intended to enclose or exclude livestock.

MEDIEVAL TO MODERN ACTIVITY IN THE ENCLOSED AREA

*Description*

Three trenches were excavated inside the enclosed area (illus 3). As restrictions were imposed by the legal status of the site, the priority was to target any evidence for structures within the enclosure. Area 2 covered the northern end of one of the two rectangular buildings revealed by air photographs and field survey, and Areas 5 and 6 were excavated to investigate anomalies shown by the resistivity survey. No environmental or C14 samples were taken for any of these areas as the stratigraphy was very



ILLUS 6 Area 2. Rectangular building. The unexcavated area is shown in outline

shallow, in many places less than 100mm, with considerable root disturbance.

In Area 2 a trench measuring 8 x 8.5m was excavated which included a length of 6.5m of the larger of the two rectangular structures (the conditions of the scheduled monument consent limited excavation of this feature to a maximum of 75%). The total internal length of this building was c 10m (illus 6). The width varied between 2.3 and 2.55m internally (3.7–4.1m externally).

The walls, which were built of drystone, varied between 0.7 and 0.8m in width and were quite irregular in alignment. At the north-west corner and in part of the west side, the wall was built directly on outcropping natural rock, but at the north-eastern corner, a dip in the rock had been leveled with a raft of stones on which the wall was built. A small quantity of rubble lay in and around the building. In the sheltered north end of it, there

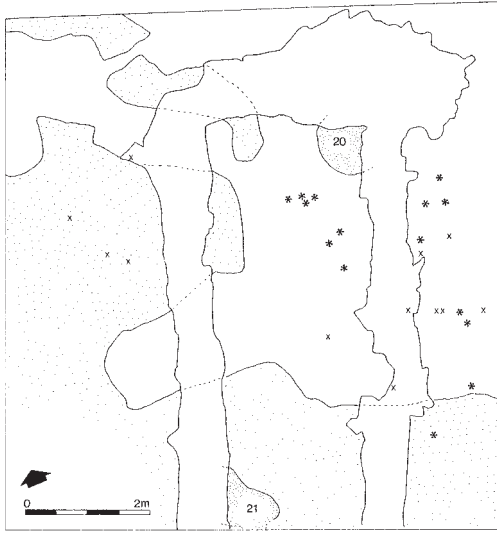
was c 0.1m of a fine peaty layer, possibly decayed turfs (9), below the rubble.

The second rectangular structure to the west was smaller, measuring c 9 x 4m (external) and possibly slightly dug in to the hilltop. A few traces of stone are visible on the surface.

#### *Interpretation and discussion of the medieval to modern material*

The excavated structure can be interpreted as a rectangular building with a poorly-built stone foundation, possibly for a turf wall. The extremely narrow plan suggests that only very short timbers were available for roofing. There is no artefactual dating evidence. On the basis of the plan, these structures could belong to any period from early medieval to 19th-century. Many small rectangular buildings have been identified in air photographs and surveys but few excavated. The majority are wider on plan; at Homefarm of Wardhouse (Yeoman 1991, 121–4, fig 6.1) for example, they were c 15m long by between 4m and 8m wide. Croft houses excavated in the medieval village (albeit legally a burgh) of Rattray were 3–5m in width and 6–18m in length and had no evidence of livestock in the buildings (Murray 1993, 140–2). Smaller buildings, more comparable to those on Berryhill, have been surveyed, for example at Doolie Bridge (15 x 3m: Shepherd & Ralston 1981, 499, fig 2) and Lower Belrorie (6 x 1.5m internally: Shepherd 1989, 22). Without excavation it is impossible to be dogmatic but these very narrow buildings are unlikely to have been used for cattle and may have been simply small dwellings. The close proximity to Bogend farm makes it unlikely that these buildings are comparable to the 19th-century squatters' houses of the Colony on Bennachie which were built on what was then common land by colonists displaced by agricultural improvement and enclosure in the neighbourhood (Upson-Smith 1999).

It has been suggested that the Berryhill structures were shielings, temporary dwellings associated with summer grazings. However the hill, which has very limited grazing, is considerably lower than most shieling sites and has been in the middle of cultivated ground from at least the 18th century (Roy 1747–55). It is conceivable, however, that they might have been huts used by drovers using the old routeway along the north flank of Bennachie which Roy's map shows by the south side of



ILLUS 7 Area 2 The distribution of flints in layers pre-dating the later rectangular building (\*) and in topsoil (x)

Berryhill. Such an explanation might tie in with re-use (though not initial construction) of the existing enclosure for overnight folding of cattle and would explain the lack of artefacts associated with the rectangular buildings.

#### PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY IN THE ENCLOSED AREA

##### *Description*

Below the building and extending east of it in Area 2 there was a shallow dip in the natural rock, measuring some 5 x 4m and 0.1–0.2m deep, being deepest below the north end of the building (illus 7).

Within this dip there was a horizon of activity earlier than the construction of the building. A hard gritty surface lay over a soft, slightly sandy layer with charcoal flecking and small fragments of burnt bone. This lay directly on the natural rock except where it overlay two small patches of burning (20, 21: illus 7), the largest 0.6m across. A scatter of flints and fragments of burnt bone was found in these layers or in the topsoil directly overlying them. The greatest concentration was at the north end of the dip.

In both Area 5 (2 x 5m) and Area 6 (2 x 10m) excavation revealed a thin dark humic topsoil,

c 0.10m deep, lying directly on the rocky natural ground surface. Five flints (Appendix 1) were found in the topsoil on the surface of the natural. The apparent anomalies in the resistivity survey appeared to derive from the underlying geology.

##### *Interpretation and discussion of the prehistoric activity in the enclosed area*

The prehistoric activity on the hill relates the flints, burnt bone and hearths in Area 2. The apparent concentration may be an illusion because the dip in natural was the only excavated area on the hilltop where any depth of stratigraphy had survived. Alan Saville (Appendix 1, below) suggests that most of the flints from Area 2, although not part of a single knapping episode, may be regarded as deriving from a single occupation event in the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. There is no structural evidence but the association of the flints with hearths suggests that there may have been occupation, albeit possibly short lived, on the hill in this period. The flints in Areas 5 and 6 may derive from slightly earlier activity, possibly in the Neolithic.

This fits well in the context of the considerable evidence of prehistoric activity in the area immediately around the hill from at least the Early Bronze Age, as shown by the distribution of artefacts and Beaker burials recorded in the Aberdeenshire Sites and Monuments Record.

It was not possible to relate this activity to the enclosure wall, which the C14 dating suggests is considerably later.

#### HUT CIRCLE OUTSIDE THE ENCLOSURE

##### *Description*

Outside the enclosure an area 18 x 16m was excavated around the hut circle (Area 1: illus 3 & 8) which was situated on a small level terrace cut slightly into the slope on the north-west flank of the hill, 156m OD, about half way between the summit and the level valley ground. There were no other structures but there was a distinction between the steeply sloping stony ground which extended north, south and east of the building and the fairly flat terrace some 15m wide which extended c 40m to the west of the entrance (at a height of 154.63–155.98m OD). This area was cleared of very heavy bracken and gorse cover and several apparent stone features



ILLUS 8 Area 1. Hut circle with entrance and annexe in foreground

were examined but proved to be natural rock outcrops covered by topsoil.

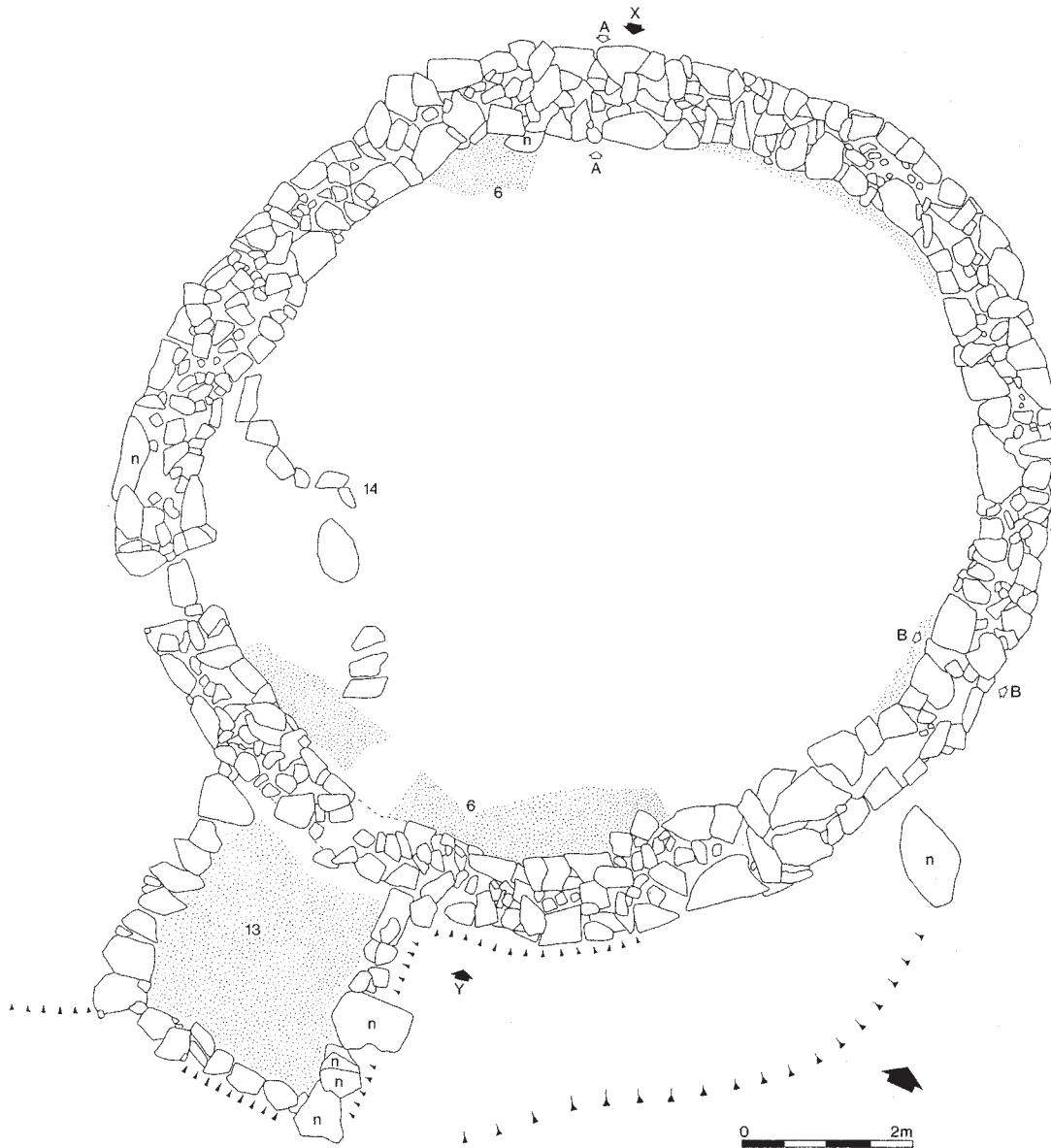
The hut circle (illus 9) was roughly circular on plan with an internal diameter of 8.6–9.0m (external diameter 10.6–10.8m) with an entrance facing south-west. A small rectangular annexe abutted the outside of the wall on the south side, near the entrance. The wall varied in width between 0.9m and 1.1m. This variation seemed to coincide with the slight angularity of the plan and may represent stages of the construction or laying out of the wall. It survived to a maximum height of 0.6m with up to two courses. Some rubble lay inside the structure, and more outside on the downhill (northern) side. Frost action had also caused some slippage of stones. It was built using natural stones from the hill. These ranged in size from c 0.2 x 0.4m to 0.4 x 0.7m, with larger stones up to 0.9m long used in the base of the inner side of the wall on the southern side and the outer side of the wall on the northern side, where they would have helped buttress against the slope of the hill.

Two cross-sections were cut through the wall (illus 9, A–A & B–B). These showed it to be well

constructed with inner and outer facing stones extending over half the width of the wall to bind the faces together. Small pinning stones had been used to level some of the facing stones. The core or hearting of the wall consisted of medium-sized stones well packed with clay to consolidate the core; earth is commonly used with the hearting stones in a drystone wall to avoid the facing stones slumping into the centre. The footing stones on the uphill (south) side were slightly cut into the natural to achieve a level base but there was no foundation trench, because of the outcropping bedrock. In places undisturbed boulders had been used as a part of the footings and incorporated into the wall. The ground in a band about 2m wide around the outer face of the wall was relatively clear of stones which were presumably used in the wall. This would also have provided a clear working area during building.

The single entrance faced south-west, over the terrace and up the valley of the Gadie Burn (illus 10). Clear views would only have been possible to west or north. An entrance to south or east would have faced uphill, with no outlook and severe drainage problems. To the north the ground falls





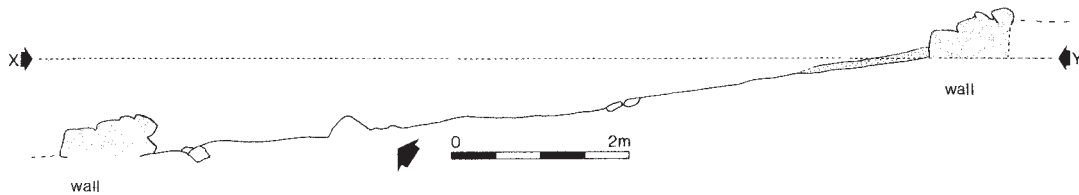
ILLUS 9 Area 1. Hut circle (n = natural rock)

away steeply from just outside the building. The entrance was well constructed with carefully chosen, flat-faced stones flanking it. It was very narrow, splaying from 0.59m on the outside to 0.77m on the inside. Flat stones set directly on the natural formed a threshold step c 0.3m wide and 0.13m above the base level of the wall stones.

There was no evidence of any foundation deposit. Patches of stone-free clay (6) survived below the rubble inside the structure, especially near the entrance and beside the walls. These appeared to be the remains of clay flooring 50–100mm deep. This would never have been horizontal (illus 11) but would nevertheless have



ILLUS 10 Area 1. Inside hut circle with detail of entrance and partition in foreground, looking west over small plateau of level ground



ILLUS 11 Area 1. Cross section of the hut circle

provided a smooth, stone-free surface. The whole interior was very disturbed by tree roots and by heavy bracken infestation, which had destroyed most of the very shallow stratigraphy. Two arcs of stones (14) set on edge in the floor lay inside the building on either side of the entrance with a flat stone c 1m from the threshold and level with it (illus 8). These may be the foundations of partitions to give protection against the prevailing wind.

The 'annexe' was a rectangular area c 2.0 x 2.5m (internally). It was enclosed by a single line of medium-sized stones forming a straight kerb but with an irregular upper surface. The southern corner incorporated a large in situ natural boulder

(split by frost). The south and east sides were dug into the slope to a maximum depth of 0.6m but the rest of the structure was built directly on the surface of the natural, c 0.15–0.2m above the base level of the adjacent part of the wall of the main building. The kerb of the annexe abutted the main wall quite tightly but was not built into it. There was no evidence of a break in the main wall to give access to the annexe but there was some tree root disturbance at this point. Nor was there any gap in the annexe kerb. The interior of the annexe was built up with c 0.2m of clean clay (13) similar to the remnants of flooring (6) in the main structure.

*Discussion and interpretation of the hut circle*

This appears to have been a substantial stone-walled structure. The well-built but very narrow entrance would make it improbable that its primary function was as a livestock pen or shed. Sheep are very difficult to drive through such a narrow entrance without guide walls to funnel them towards it and cattle would not fit through it. It would even be difficult to carry in large loads of fodder or grain. The shallow stratigraphy and bracken root disturbance made phosphate sampling pointless.

There were no domestic finds and no surviving evidence of a hearth, both commonly used as indicators of domestic use. The scarcity of lithic finds, particularly the lack of querns, is noteworthy, but should perhaps be seen in the context of the equally sparse finds on other excavated hut circles such as those at Old Kinnord (Ogston 1931, 6–10). The entrance, the high standard of wall construction, and the remnants of flooring and partitions all suggest that this was a domestic building which can best be described a stone-walled roundhouse.

Some rubble was noted to the east of the building when paths were being constructed on the hill in 1996, but the quite small amounts of rubble suggest that the wall may never have been very high. There are no adjacent dykes or buildings for which stone may have been robbed and the steep lower slopes of the hill would render carting difficult, making it unlikely that the walls were robbed for the 18th- to 20th-century walls on the lower ground around the base of the hill. There was no evidence of clay or turf having been used for the upper wall and it would seem unlikely with so much available stone and such obvious competence in stone building. Reconstruction is difficult as the interior was so disturbed but there was no evidence of any post-pits or pad-stones for roof support posts. The wall, however, was strong enough to withstand the outward thrust of a roof.

There was no evidence for the function of the annexe. It is possible that the kerb acted as the base for a timber or turf framework although its upper surface makes this hard to visualize. It does however seem probable that it was in some way covered or roofed, perhaps with a very simple lean-to roof propped against the wall of the main building. Otherwise the clay floor of the annexe would have been full of water from a combination of eaves-drip

from the main building and drainage from the slope above, which make even quite simple functions such as a 'garden' or an unroofed wood store quite hard to imagine. The only stratified find was a flint flake from within the clay matrix of the floor. This would have derived from when the floor was laid or from some activity in the area from which the clay was dug, rather than relating to any function of the annexe itself. A few finds such as a clay pipe stem, modern cartridge case, musket ball, a bit of wire and a single unworked flint flake were found in the topsoil around the building. None of these could be related to its construction or use and dating must depend on structural parallels.

Little has changed since 1983 when Ralston et al (1983, 154–5) summarized the existing knowledge of hut circles in the North-East, the two main series to have been excavated being those in the Howe of Cromar (Ogston 1931) and at Forvie. Many more are known from survey. The size and location of the Berryhill example are within the typical ranges for the area, and although at 155m OD it is among the lower surviving examples, although this reflects survival as much as original distribution. The scant artefactual evidence from Cromar and Forvie suggests that there is continuity of type from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age. However, sites such as Wardhouse (Yeoman 1991, 121–4, fig 6.1) and Doolie Bridge (Shepherd & Ralston 1981, 499, fig 2) reveal hut circles in association with or apparently replaced by medieval longhouse settlement. This suggests that the type may have had a far longer currency. In assessing isolated hut circles such as Berryhill it is perhaps worth noting that individual buildings could have been in use for a considerable time, being re-thatched as need dictated. In comparison, timber-built roundhouses have a 10–20 year lifespan dictated by the earthfast posts, so an apparent group of two or three timber roundhouses may in fact represent successive rebuilds equivalent to a single stone-walled roundhouse.

## OTHER ACTIVITY ON THE HILL

The western side of the hill outside the wall formed a quite gently sloping plateau similar to the area where the roundhouse stood, and this was therefore cleared of vegetation and surveyed in detail to see if any other settlement was apparent. There were no visible remains of other buildings. The ground was

very rough with outcropping natural rock along the break of slope. It could not have been used for cultivation but would have been suitable as rough grazing (which it was used for in the recent past). A stone-built boundary wall (illus 3: D) extended downslope, radiating west from the hilltop circumference wall. Another shorter section of wall abutted this. These walls may have divided grazing areas. To the south of these walls a small area of lush vegetation and rushes suggests a source of water. A later feature in this area (illus 5: 404) was probably a grouse butt used for rough shooting on the hill. It was an oval dip c 2 x 1.5m with a flimsy curved wall along the downhill side, built only one stone thick to a height of c 0.65m. Cartridge cases were found nearby.

The north slope of the hill was steeper but a trench 37m long was excavated extending north from Area 3, to provide a section to relate the hilltop wall with the surrounding stratigraphy and to investigate what appeared to be a circular setting of stones at the base of the slope. This proved to be natural outcropping rock and this northern slope was also revealed as extremely rocky below a very shallow topsoil. Further areas of the north slopes lower down the hill and extending towards the north-east were observed in 1996 during a watching brief undertaken while paths were being built on the hill. As the paths were only 1.5m wide interpretation of possible stone lines on this extremely rocky hillside is probably foolhardy.

No excavation was undertaken on the south and east flanks of the hill. Extensive fieldwalking showed that there had been some quarrying on the east where the modern cultivated fields were much closer to the hill than on the other sides. Most of the south side is hidden under extremely dense gorse and could not be investigated. A stone cist with an 'urn', probably a Beaker burial, was recorded as having been found on this south flank of Berryhill in the 19th century (1870 OS 1:10,560).

## CONCLUSIONS

The excavation at Berryhill, far from simplifying an understanding of small hilltop enclosures in this part of North-East Scotland, has perhaps made it more complicated.

The small rectangular buildings had no artefactual dating but post-date the prehistoric activity in Area 2 and as discussed above they

could be Early Historic, medieval or even modern. The very narrow width, poor construction and small size suggest that they were built by poor people or for very temporary use. Both of these considerations perhaps make it unlikely that the people who used these buildings also built the enclosure wall, which would have taken a moderate amount of both time and labour. It is probable, however, that the builders of the rectangular structures used the pre-existing enclosure as a grazing area. It is also possible that they broke through the wall to make the secondary entrance and build the short livestock guide wall in Area 4. However, as the hill had been used as rough grazing until a few years ago, some of the alterations and breaks in the enclosure wall may be of relatively recent date.

The investment of time and labour required to gather the stone and build the enclosure would indicate a degree of stability and control over the ground. It suggests reasonably settled conditions. The unenclosed hut circle on the lower slope also suggests peaceful settlement and may be contemporary. This hut circle is the only evidence of domestic building on the hill which may date to the late prehistoric period. Air photographs, resistivity survey and excavation have yielded no evidence of prehistoric buildings within the enclosed area. It is therefore possible that the enclosure was intended to control livestock. The wall would have been suitable for stock control. Livestock could only have been enclosed on this relatively limited grazing for short periods of time and there is no evidence of water within the enclosed area. Herds which normally grazed the hill flanks might have been held in the enclosure for protection overnight or in bad winter weather. If they were totally excluded, the flat hilltop may have been cultivated during the summer and stock grazed on the stubble in the winter. There is no evidence of clearance cairns associated with prehistoric cultivation, although the wall itself would have consumed cleared stone. If cultivation took place on the hill in late prehistory, there are no

rigs to suggest that it continued on the hilltop in the medieval period and cultivation is only shown on the base of the hill on Roy's map of the 18th century (Roy 1747–55).

This is clearly different from the model presented by other nearby hilltop sites such as Tillymuick, where there are multiple house foundations within the enclosed area, although the complexity shown at Berryhill urges caution for single-period explanation of such sites prior to excavation.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and the Archaeolink Trust for funding this excavation, Aberdeenshire Archaeological Services for permission to use the air photograph of the site, Archaeolink Trust for access to the site and Historic Scotland for funding the C14 date and permission to excavate within the scheduled area. Thanks are also due to Ian Shepherd for his encouragement, to Colin Heathcote and his team for the resistivity survey, to Alan Saville for his discussion of the flints and to Anne Crone (AOC Scotland) for identifying the charcoal. Above all I wish to thank Dave Harding for his help throughout the excavation and all the volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm.

#### APPENDIX 1: The Flints

Alan Saville

Excavations at Berryhill recovered a small collection of 40 pieces of struck flint, weighing 173g in

TABLE 2

Overall typology and provenance of the flint artefacts

Type	Area 1	Area 2	Area 5	Area 6	Totals
scrapers	–	3	–	–	3
edge-trimmed flake	–	1	–	–	1
miscellaneous retouched pieces	–	3	1	–	4
cores	–	3	–	–	3
core fragments	–	2	–	1	3
splintered flake	–	1	–	–	1
chunk	1	–	–	–	1
unretouched flakes	1	14	2	1	18
unclassified burnt pieces	–	6	–	–	6
Totals	2	33	3	2	40

total. The flint used is of different colours, including grey, brown, grey-brown, red-brown, and red-grey, but is all within the variability of the local, and readily available, Buchan flint (Saville 1995). Each of the 14 cortical pieces has a chatter-marked cortex, which is another characteristic of this raw material.

Table 2 summarizes the typology of the collection and its provenance by area. Most pieces came from Area 2, where they were scattered between several contexts (Table 3). A listing and description of each artefact is included in the site archive.

#### AREA 2

Insofar as they are diagnostic, most of the 33 pieces from Area 2 could represent part of a single assemblage disturbed and perhaps depleted by later activity in the same location. However, the presence of both burnt and unburnt flints in some contexts (1, 12, 14, 16 & 17) may hint at a complexity in the formation process.

Two of the cores (find nos 2 & 93) are thin scalar bipolar cores on split pebbles and the third (no 59) is a multi-platform discoidal core. The two core fragments comprise one (no 3) which is unclassifiable and another (no 111) which is from a scalar bipolar core, as is the splintered flake (no 4), which may represent the attempt to establish a new core on a small flake.

Two of the scrapers are on cortical primary flakes from small pebbles. One (no 9) is an end scraper with a damaged scraping edge, the other (no 56) is an end scraper on which the scraping edge is continued down the right-hand side of the flake. The best-crafted implement of the whole collection is a broad end scraper (no 1) on a tertiary faceted-butt flake. This scraper, which was a topsoil find, seems unlikely to be part of the same industry as the

TABLE 3

Flint artefacts from Area 2 by context. In addition to the unclassified burnt pieces, one unretouched flake from context 14 and one from context 17 are burnt

Type	Context								Totals
	1	8	10	12	14	16	17	18	
scrapers	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	3
edge-trimmed flake	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
miscellaneous retouched pieces	–	–	–	–	1	–	2	–	3
cores	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	3
core fragments	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
splintered flake	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
unretouched flakes	1	1	1	3	2	–	2	4	14
unclassified burnt pieces	2	–	–	1	2	1	–	–	6
Totals	8	1	2	4	5	1	6	6	33

other pieces. The edge-trimmed flake (no 110) is a blade with irregular trimming or use-modification down the right-hand side of the flake, which also has a short stretch of gloss visible on the ventral surface.

One of the miscellaneous retouched pieces (no 15) could be a fragment of a scalar core; the other two comprise a small flake (no 78) with possibly fortuitous modification at the upper right-hand side, and a small fragment (no 68) from an unidentifiable implement type. The unretouched flakes are mostly small and irregular, but include a complete secondary blade (no 5). The latter has a faceted butt and has been struck from a platform core, as has the edge-trimmed flake and several of the other unretouched pieces, one of which (no 109) may be a rejuvenation flake from a platform core. In fact there is little indication from the flakes, except in one case (no 19), for scalar bipolar core production.

#### OTHER AREAS

The flints from the other areas are few in number and warrant little comment. The burnt core fragment (no 124) from Area 6 is a near-complete platform core; the miscellaneous retouched piece (no 122) from Area 5 is the proximal segment of a blade-like platform-core flake with inverse trimming on one edge.

#### DISCUSSION

The excavations at Berryhill have clearly not produced evidence for any intensive use of flint on the hill in prehistory. Had that been the case one would have expected the later activity to have resulted in the presence of larger quantities of flint in residual contexts. The small assemblage from Area 2 has

little diagnostic potential, though, apart from one of the scrapers, it could be seen as essentially homogenous and probably of a single period; the typology and technology indicate this to be post-Mesolithic. There are definite parallels with the flint technology found at the flint extraction sites at Den of Boddam and Skelmuir Hill – the three cores from Area 2 can be matched easily at Skelmuir Hill – and it is possible that a similar late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age time-frame is represented here (Saville 2000). The few pieces from Areas 5 and 6 are not directly comparable and could be rather earlier, though still probably Neolithic rather than Mesolithic.

#### APPENDIX 2: Other Finds

##### Hilary Murray

All other finds were from topsoil or the ground surface and relate to the casual use of the hill for grazing, rough shooting, and even army training over the years. They include a lead musket ball, cartridge cases, a mortar fragment and the bowl of a clay pipe. These are retained but will not be catalogued here. A modern nail found in Area 2, context 17, the context in which many of the flints occurred, emphasizes the degree of bioturbation. A sub-rectangular fragment of schist (no 104) from the same context may possibly have been used as a hone but can not be dated. It has some striations which are not part of the original surface and has been artificially smoothed.

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